

Commander's Connection



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Shirley Henderson

Col. Sam Angelella (left) presents Capt. Paul Carlton, 79th Fighter Squadron, with a Distinguished Flying Cross Nov. 25. Lt. Col. Daniel Hampton, 20th Operations Support Squadron, and Capt. Brad Turner, 55th Fighter Squadron, also received the award.

"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil.

*Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in **The Shaw Spirit**.*

Q I have a friend living in a dormitory infested with mold. She has been complaining to the dorm managers for awhile. She recently found out she has an allergic reaction to mold, which could be harmful to her health. What can be done to solve this problem?

A Thank you for voicing your concern. 20th Civil Engineer Squadron members are aggressively working the mold problem. Fan belts and replacement fans were bought for each dorm to improve ventilation. In addition, dorm managers bought dehumidifiers for all rooms. Cleaning solutions were distributed to residents with instructions on how they can assist in controlling mold. We encourage all residents to report maintenance requirements to their dorm managers.

Give thanks for freedom

Americans encouraged to honor sacrifice

By Staff Sgt. Scott Sturkol
U.S. Central Air Forces
Forward Public Affairs

SOUTHWEST ASIA -- When I was in Iraq in late October, out on a Basra street patrol with the British Army, we had an Iraqi interpreter with us named Ahmed.

Ahmed was a man in his late 30s who was partially bald and spoke broken English, but whenever he spoke it was easy enough to understand what he meant. During the patrol we discussed many things, but one thing he said sticks with me today and will for a long time. He said, "Say thank you to Mr. Bush! We are free from Saddam Hussein and we thank him for it."

Ahmed's praise for the president was also meant for all American people. The majority of Iraqis I visited expressed they were thankful for freedom. It is obviously something they weren't used to, but they know at this time last year they weren't free, so their expression of thankfulness is evident everywhere you go in Iraq.

Ahmed's words can also give us all reason to be thankful at home. On the front lines of the global war on terrorism, the lives of American soldiers, Marines, airmen, and sailors are on the line to protect the freedom we enjoy at home. The U.S. military is an all-volunteer force and like me, they want to protect that precious right of freedom we as Americans have enjoyed for more than 225 years.

For the first time in my military career, and in my life for that matter, I am deployed away from family and friends this holiday season. I am thankful to have wonderful people to come home to when I am done, but also thankful I have a chance to directly support an effort that brings freedom to people in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

But even when I am not deployed, I know serving at my home base and doing whatever I

can to help others there also contributes to the overall effort. I am glad to be an American and to have the ability to give others a reason to be thankful.

A long time ago, my parents taught me it is not what you can do for yourself that matters as much what you can do to help others. That virtue I received from my parents carries right with me to the front lines of this war we are fighting.

On Sept. 11, 2001, I don't know of a person who saw the events of that day who didn't stop for a moment, look at a nearby loved one or call a loved one and say how much that person meant to him or her. That day brought to bear a good reason to appreciate what we have, who we are and what we, as Americans, have helped others achieve.

Right after Sept. 11, 2001, we, along with our allies in the freedom-loving world, helped bring freedom to Afghanistan and we did it again this year in Iraq. In those two countries alone, there are more than 50 million people who are happy to be free of the brutal regimes that governed them.

American lives have been lost along the way to bring freedom to those countries and I honor those comrades of mine who gave the ultimate sacrifice for freedom -- their life. Their lives are not lost in vain, because like those who paid the same price before them, they loved freedom and appreciated it.

As Thanksgiving passed here in my deployed location, there was an observance at the dining facility. But most likely, for those of us who attended the feast, it wasn't food on our minds.

We were thinking of family and friends back home and also of where else we could be for the holidays.

Also, we were giving thanks to our heroes on the home front and the battlefield. Most of all, however, we gave thanks for our freedom and we were part of something that helped bring it to a whole lot more people this year.

The Shaw Spirit

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Motorcycle accident opens rider's eyes

"Team Shaw lost one of its own, Staff Sgt. Ricky Robinson, 20th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, in a motorcycle-related accident Monday. The following article was set to run prior to this accident, and emphasizes the importance of proper personal protective equipment, defensive driving and safety 24/7/365." -- Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander

By Capt. Wil Kauffman
55th Fighter Squadron pilot

Although my father wasn't much of a motorcycle rider, he had riding experience and once gave me this advice: "Always remember everyone is trying to kill you and motorcycles are invisible." After two years of riding, I've discovered there is much truth in his statement.

I purchased my first bike this past April and have put nearly 5,000 miles on it since then. Until last April, my experience was on other people's bikes. I've been to a motorcycle course taught by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, and I believe in wearing the proper protective gear. Even though you won't see me racing at the local track anytime soon, and I prefer to keep both tires on the ground, I am comfortable on a motorcycle and consider myself to be a competent rider.

It was a clear mid-October evening in Sumter. The road was dry, the sky was clear and the sun was setting. I was out riding and enjoying the beautiful fall weather. I was wearing my normal protective gear and riding conservatively. I have a silver helmet and a brightly colored mesh riding jacket with reflective strips on the shoulders. Like most motorcycles these days, mine has bright dual-halogen

headlights that are always on when the engine is running. The motorcycle is bright silver and, in my opinion, all this makes it pretty easy to see.

I had just turned and was traveling 45 miles per hour, riding in the right lane. I had the right of way. To quote my father again: "It's not who's right that counts, it's who's left." I noticed an older gentleman driving a pick-up. When I first spotted this particular driver, he was stopped at a stop sign on a side street to my right, waiting to make a left turn. He looked to his left, in my direction, and appeared to make eye contact with me. He looked to the right, just as any safe driver would, and then looked left again. Once again, it appeared we made eye contact.

What happened next is the reason I am writing this story. The gentleman looked forward and started to pull out in front of me. It was a perfectly-timed and orchestrated maneuver allowing his pickup to span both southbound lanes at the same time, all about 20 - 30 feet in front of my bike.

As quickly as I could, I assessed the situation. I didn't feel I could make it around him on the right because of my speed, not to mention there was sand on the road. I didn't feel I had enough time to make it to the left in front of him since that was the direction of his travel. I quickly checked the mirrors. There was no one immediately behind me so I decided to try to stop. I used the maximum front and rear brake pressure possible without losing control. In doing so, the back tire locked, and the front tire started to wobble back and forth. This lasted just a moment before I decided I wouldn't be able to stop before t-boning the truck. Since that wasn't what I wanted to do, I decided to lay my bike down on its right side to avoid the collision.

My bike and I slid for about 30 feet and came to rest at the curb on the right side of the road. I got up, a little shaken, and watched the gentleman drive

away. At this point, the combination of the low light at dusk and the distance made it impossible for me to get a license plate, so he got away clean.

Fortunately for me and my insurance claim, there were two witnesses who stopped and helped me out with the police report, and they both agreed I was not at fault.

I received two small abrasions, neither larger than a quarter, a sore ankle and a sprained thumb from the accident. My clothing took a good beating, most notably my helmet, which took a sizable impact on the back. The damage to my bike totaled just under \$2,000, but I was pretty happy with the lack of damage to myself.

The MSF course teaches defensive driving, always leaving an out and always being ready to evade an accident. The scenario I encountered is covered in the course as being a high-risk situation for an accident. I have encountered this same situation all too often, but this incident ended in an unavoidable accident. The fact is many automobile drivers have a difficult time judging distance with motorcycles or even seeing motorcycles. I was nearly hit one day on base in a similar situation, wearing my reflective vest, during a bright day. The driver stopped me the next day to apologize and told me he just didn't see me.

Driving on the road is risky. Driving on two wheels certainly increases the risk. The MSF teaches driving skills designed to help avoid accidents. However, some accidents can't be prevented, and that's one reason protective gear is so important. The skills taught in the riding course help me to be the safest I can be, and in this case the protective gear certainly saved me some major damage. What now? In the not too distant future, I have every intention of attending the MSF Experienced Rider's course, and, of course, I need to fix my bike.

NCO finds perspective in Shaw youth

By Staff Sgt. Misty Crooks
NCO in charge of 20th Mission Support Squadron Commander's Support Staff

As an NCO, wife and mother, I often find it hard to balance everything on my plate. At times I feel like throwing my hands up in the air and giving up. Thankfully, coaching Shaw youth soccer saved me from doing just that.

I have to admit, at first the thought of coaching soccer seemed like just another task to juggle in my day. But I knew if I didn't step up and coach, some children might lose out on the opportunity to play soccer. Since my daughter would be one of those children, I knew it was my responsibility to take on the challenge.

At first, coaching 7 to 8-year-olds was just that, a challenge. I had to force myself to communicate with them at their level. But as the season progressed, I often found myself at work, looking at the clock and hoping the hours would pass faster so I could head to practice.

Each child on that soccer team made me feel important. Their eyes and ears were wide open for my instruction. I taught them how to dribble the ball, and they taught me patience which I brought with me to work and my home. Suddenly, everything I once complained about seemed small next to

the children's needs and desires. I made an impact every time I showed up for practice or a game. They looked up to me and that was powerful.

During games, I became engulfed in watching the kids put their learned skills to the test. Their drive and determination inspired me. I found myself able to balance all of my tasks at hand. I found purpose because I knew others looked up to me. Life became simpler because everything was in perspective.

As the season came to an end, I knew I would miss the smiling faces of 14 youngsters who depended on

me. The last game ended in a dual victory. Our team scored the most goals it scored in the season and I gained a new sense of self-confidence and worth.

I will never forget those children. Even if I coach a youth sport again, the 2003 soccer season will have a special place in my heart. I wouldn't have survived being a single mother during my husband's deployment or juggling the many deadlines at work without those kids. They instilled strength and initiative in me, which forced me to accomplish everything I was expected to and more. I was more than a coach -- I was their friend and in turn, they were mine.

I encourage everyone to volunteer their time for a good cause. It gave me a new outlook on life!

